



# CONSUMER ALERT

## How To Use Electricity Wisely This Summer



With sweltering weather upon us, we find ourselves running for the comfort of an air-conditioned area to keep cool. During such hot days, Michigan's electrical system is used to the maximum (usually in the mid-to late-afternoon), with all possible generating equipment operating, and utility companies and alternative energy suppliers buying power from neighboring states and Ontario. And, although Michigan does not face the electricity problems that California has experienced in the past with rolling blackouts, it is important to avoid even short-term power shortages.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) encourages all consumers to help avoid a power "crunch" that could occur during the summer months during times of peak electricity usage. Just a few minor adjustments in our leisure, personal and business lives will help ensure adequate electric capacity in the state this summer and, in many cases, help consumers and businesses save money on electricity bills, too. If every household and business does just a little bit to help, short-term electric supply problems may be avoided, and we may all enjoy the benefits of lower utility bills.

Many of the same techniques that save energy in the winter, such as insulating, caulking and weatherstripping, also help in the summer. Here are some additional steps homeowners and businesses can take to reduce energy consumption:

- Use electric ovens, dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers, and other large appliances or office equipment in the early morning or late evening hours whenever possible. These are big electricity users and shifting the time of use will reduce the potential stress to Michigan's electric system at peak times.
- When possible, turn off the air conditioner, open windows, and use fans.
- Keep the outside of air-conditioner units free from leaves and other debris that can clog vents. Keep cooling systems well tuned with periodic maintenance by service professionals. Clean or replace air filters once a month.
- Set the air conditioner thermostat as high as possible -- 78 degrees is often considered a comfortable indoor temperature and can result in big savings.
- Close off unoccupied areas and shut air-conditioning vents; also, turn off the air conditioner when the area is not being used.
- Turn off lights, equipment or appliances in any room not in use. Unplug unneeded equipment that draws electricity. Avoid placing lamps or other heat-generating appliances next to the air-conditioning thermostat. Heat from these appliances may cause the air-conditioner run longer than necessary.
- Keep out the daytime sun with vertical blinds or awnings on the outside of windows, and by closing draperies, blinds and shades indoors.
- If possible, replace older, inefficient appliances with updated models. If purchasing a new appliance or air conditioner, look for the "Energy Star" logo, which indicates a high efficiency product.
- Plant Shade trees close to the house on South and West sides, and keep blinds shut to prevent sunlight from entering the house.

Some additional tips for businesses include:

- Set fax machines and printers for sleep mode when not in use. Also, network one printer for several users.
- Make sure the power management feature is enabled on computers and set to the shortest acceptable time for your operation. Also, use laptops in lieu of other personal computers.
- Turn off copiers and computers (or at least monitors) at night and during the weekends.



Additional information can be found online at [www.michigan.gov/mpscalerts](http://www.michigan.gov/mpscalerts) or at [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov).

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